Rush Creek Hydroelectric System,
Worker Cottage (Building 104)
Rush Creek
June Lake Vicinity
Mono County
California

**HAER No.** CA-166-C

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**Historic American Engineering Record**
**National Park Service**
**Department of the Interior**
**San Francisco, California**

# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

**Rush Creek Hydroelectric System,**
**Worker Cottage (Building No. 104)**
**Rush Creek**
**June Lake Vicinity**
**Mono County**
**California**

**HAER No. CA-166-C**

**Location:** Sections 17 and 20, Township 2 South, Range 26 East, M.D.M, Mono County, California (UTM Coordinates 11/313081/4181858), in the eastern Sierra Nevada Mountain Range about 2.5 miles west of the town of June Lake, California, and 260 air miles due north of Los Angeles.

**Date of Construction:** 1922

**Builder:** Nevada-California Power Company, W. C. Tanner, Architect

**Present Owner:** Southern California Edison Company
2244 Walnut Grove Avenue
Rosemead, CA 91770

**Original Use:** Worker Cottage

**Present Use:** Worker Cottage

**Significance:** Building 104 is one of the earliest Rush Creek worker cottages. Designed by the Riverside, California architect, W. C. Tanner, it combines Craftsman Bungalow and English Cottage styles. The Rush Creek System is significant for its position in the development of hydroelectric generation on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, and for innovations in dam construction and powerhouse planning.

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Environmental Affairs Division
Rosemead, CA 91770

**Date:** September 30, 1997

I. DESCRIPTION

The Rush Creek Powerhouse and associated residential complex is located at 7,230 feet elevation just southwest of Silver Lake at the base of the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Silver Lake is the most northerly of the lakes in the June Lake Loop which drains north into the Mono Lake Basin.

When constructed, hydroelectric power plants like Rush Creek occupied remote locations and required around-the-clock attendance by operators and maintenance workers. As a result, residential complexes consisting of worker cottages and support facilities were constructed at these power plants to accommodate the workers and their families.

Building 104 was built by the Nevada-California Power Company in 1922 along with several other worker cottages (buildings 103, 105, and 108). Buildings 103, 104, and 105 were originally built from the same plans. All of these buildings were designed by California architect, W. C. Tanner. A resident of Riverside from 1915 to 1923, Tanner had a studio in the Carmel Tower of the Mission Inn where he painted murals in the kitchen and lectured on art. In 1921 he had an architect's office on Main Street in Riverside.

Building 104 is located at the southern end of the Rush Creek powerhouse complex along with two other worker cottages (buildings 103 and 106) in a "natural" unlandscaped setting. Building 104 is situated on a rise approximately one hundred feet southwest of the powerhouse (photo CA-166-C-1). An asphalt-paved stub road looping up from the south Rush Creek powerhouse complex collector road around the south end of building 103 provides vehicular access to building 103 and building 104. A series of concrete steps with welded steel handrail ascends from the powerhouse to the landing between buildings 103 and 104 (photo CA-166-C-2).

Building 104 incorporates approximately 800 square feet of interior space into a single-story structure with basement. The outer walls of this structure are 4-inch poured concrete reinforced with 3/8-inch rods. The design of building 104 is similar to English city working cottages, incorporating a steep side-gable peaked roof, tall slender chimney, and six-over-one sash fenestration of the English Cottage Style into its Rustic look. Craftsman Style embellishments include knee-bracket supports and decorative ship-lap siding (now covered by asphalt shingles) on the gable ends, and exposed rafter tails.

Accessed by stone and concrete steps, the recessed front entry has an offset gable with crown molding. Stone facing extends along the front (east side) and east half of the south end foundation of the original structure (photo CA-166-C-3). A stone retaining wall divides the upper (rear) of the house from the front on the south side.

Mimicking the front of the house, a gable frames the chimney on the rear (west side) of the structure (photo CA-166-C-4). In 1979, a steel roof was installed over existing shingles. Probably around 1972 metal hand rails were added near the side entryway along the top of the rock retaining wall.

In 1946, a bedroom addition like that on buildings 103 and 105 was planned but never executed, leaving the structure's 20 foot by 36 foot dimensions intact. In 1957, however, a 10 foot by 18 foot wood-frame bedroom wing was added to the north end of the front (east) side of the structure, giving the building an "L" shape (photo CA-166-C-5). The addition was sheathed in V-joint ship-lap siding, which has since been covered with asphalt shingles. The window from the original outer wall was used in the addition, and a new wood-framed sash window was added to the south wall. The Craftsman decorative elements of the original structure (knee-bracket supports and exposed rafter tails under the eaves) were continued on the addition. During this construction the small entryway porch was enclosed into the house interior and the front door was relocated to the south side of this new structure.

At the same time the new bedroom wing was added, the bathroom was moved from the west end of the original bedroom (bedroom number one) and relocated between this room and the new bedroom. The sloping roof over the three foot extension of the old bathroom on the north exterior wall was replaced with a gable roof, sympathetic to the overall cottage design.

The house has two small unfinished basements (photo CA-166-C-6). One is located under the kitchen in the original structure and is accessed through a plank door on the south side of the house (photo CA-166-C-3). The other is located under the bedroom addition, and is accessed through a plank door on the south side of this wing adjacent and below the front entry.

The 1-light front door enters into the 7 foot by 7 foot vestibule created from the enclosure of the recessed front porch (photo CA-166-C-7). The walls in this room and throughout the house are plaster; original doors have simple wide decorative wood surrounds as do original windows which also have narrow sills. A panel door on the east wall opens to bedroom number two (the

bedroom addition). The opposite wall opens to the living room. The floors in the vestibule, and in all the other rooms of the house except the bathroom and kitchen, are hardwood.

A 6-light over 1-light, double-hung, wood-framed window pierces the east wall of the 12 foot by 17 foot living room overlooking the front entry steps (photo CA-166-C-8). Adjacent to the window on the south wall, a door opens to the kitchen. Two 6-light over 1-light, double-hung, wood-framed windows flank the former location of the fireplace on the west or back wall (photo CA-166-C-9); the fireplace was probably removed in 1946 at the same time similar remodeling was occurring to buildings 103 and 105, and replaced with a built-in bookshelf which was later removed. A door through the north wall leads to bedroom number one. The original plaster living room ceiling has been replaced with acoustical tile. Illumination is provided by a single electrical ceiling fixture.

Bedroom number one measures 9 feet by 12 feet. At the northwest corner of the room a recessed built-in closet occupies part of the space of the original bathroom (photo CA-166-C-10). A small 1-light over 1-light, double-hung, wood-framed window pierces the west wall in the former location of a walk-in closet. A 6-light over 1-light, double-hung, wood-framed window is located on the north wall. A doorway on the east wall leads to the bathroom shared with bedroom number two (photo CA-166-C-11). Illumination is provided by a single electrical ceiling fixture.

The 9 foot by 6 foot bathroom has panel doors on the east and west wall for entry from either bedroom (photo CA-166-C-12). A wood-framed sliding-glass window pierces the north wall opposite the tub (photo CA-166-C-13). A single electric wall fixture above the sink provides illumination. Flooring is linoleum.

The 9 1/2 foot by 15 foot bedroom number two is the addition built in 1957. Like the original part of the house, walls are plaster. A 3 foot deep floor-to-ceiling built-in closet occupies the entire north end of the room (photo CA-166-B-14). A 6-light over 1-light, double-hung, wood-framed window pierces the east wall, and another 6-light over 1-light, double-hung, wood-framed window pierces the south wall adjacent the door to the vestibule (photo CA-166-C-15).

The 9 foot by 12 foot kitchen has updated cabinets, sink, countertop, and faucet. One original wood-framed sliding-glass window pierces the north wall overlooking the front entry (photo CA-166-C-16). Two more original wood-framed sliding-glass windows pierce the south wall above the sink (photo CA-

166-C-17). Flooring is linoleum. Illumination is provided by a single electrical ceiling fixture and a wall fixture over the sink.

A 6-light door on the west wall of the kitchen opens to the side-exit utility room. An adjacent panel door opens to the 5 foot by 6 foot walk-in pantry (photo CA-166-C-18). The pantry features shelving, linoleum flooring, plumbing for a sink, and a 1-light over 1-light, double-hung, wood-framed window through the south wall (photo CA-166-C-19). A single overhead electric light illuminates the pantry.

The side-exit utility room features a 1-light exit door on the south wall (photo CA-166-B-20). A small alcove at the west end of the landing was originally designed to be a broom closet enclosed by a door like that on building 108. Flooring in this room is linoleum.

## II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

See HAER No. CA-166-A for a description of the historic context of the Rush Creek Hydroelectric Project. The Rush Creek Hydroelectric Project was one of three hydroelectric projects in the Mono Basin of California owned by the Nevada-California Power Company, the others being Lee Vining and Mill Creek (Lundy). Each of these facilities had small enclaves of worker housing.

## III. SOURCES

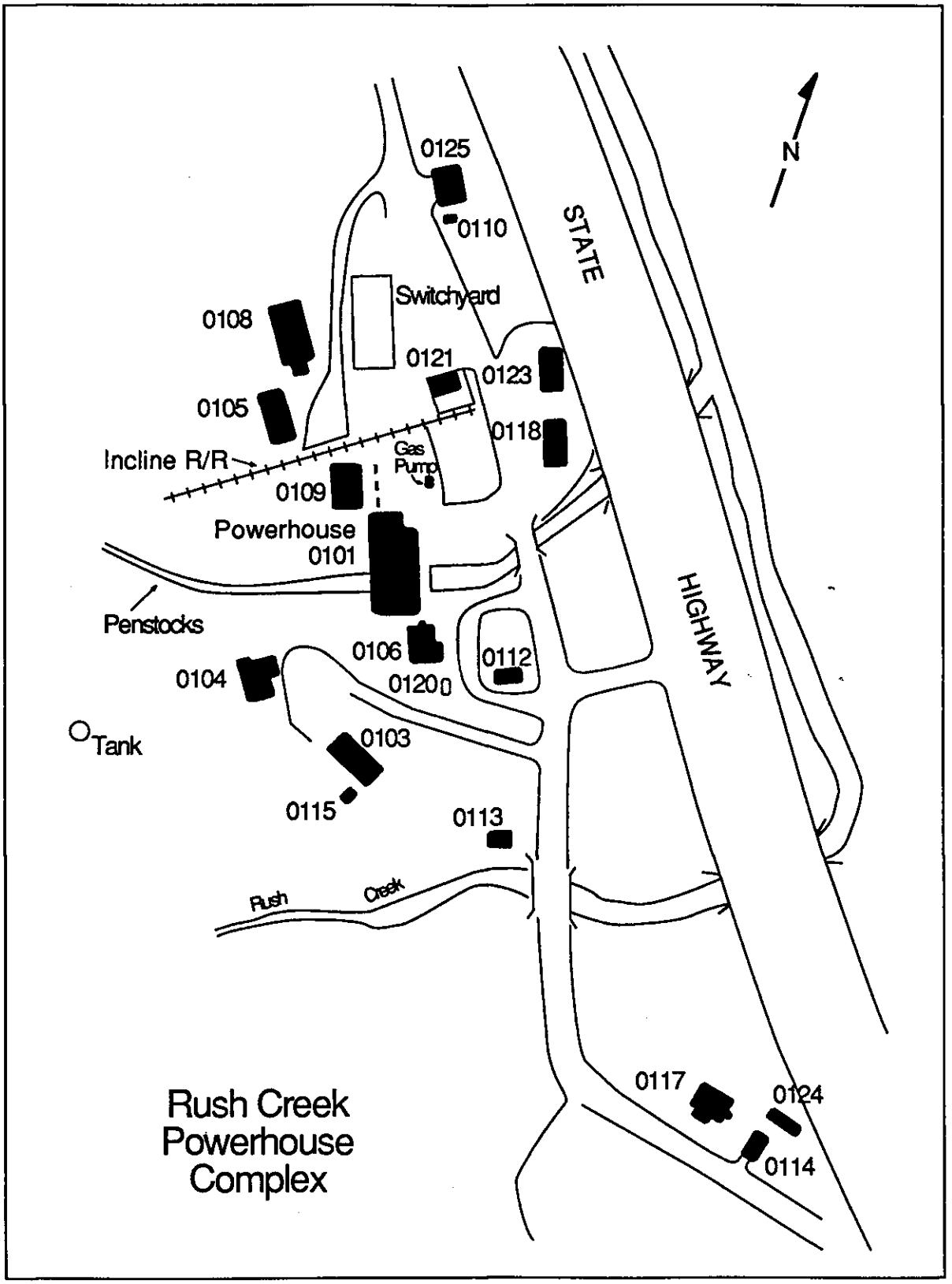
Diamond, Valerie H., and Robert A. Hicks
1988 Historic Overview of the Rush Creek and Lee Vining Creek Hydroelectric Projects. Report to the Southern California Edison Company. Fair Oaks: Theodoratus Cultural Research, Inc.

Fowler, Frederick Hall
1923 Hydroelectric Power Systems of California and Their Extensions into Oregon and Nevada. Department of the Interior, United States Geological Survey, *Water Supply Paper 493*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Williams, James C., and Robert A. Hicks
1989 Evaluation of the Historic Resources of the Rush Creek and Lee Vining Creek Hydroelectric System. Report to the Southern California Edison Company. Fair Oaks: Theodoratus Cultural Research, Inc.

## IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This Historic American Engineering Record documentation Building 104, Rush Creek Hydroelectric System, was undertaken because the building represents excess housing. SCE has automated the Rush Creek Hydroelectric System for remote operation. This has made it unnecessary to have on-site crews, and thus residential units like this house have become obsolete.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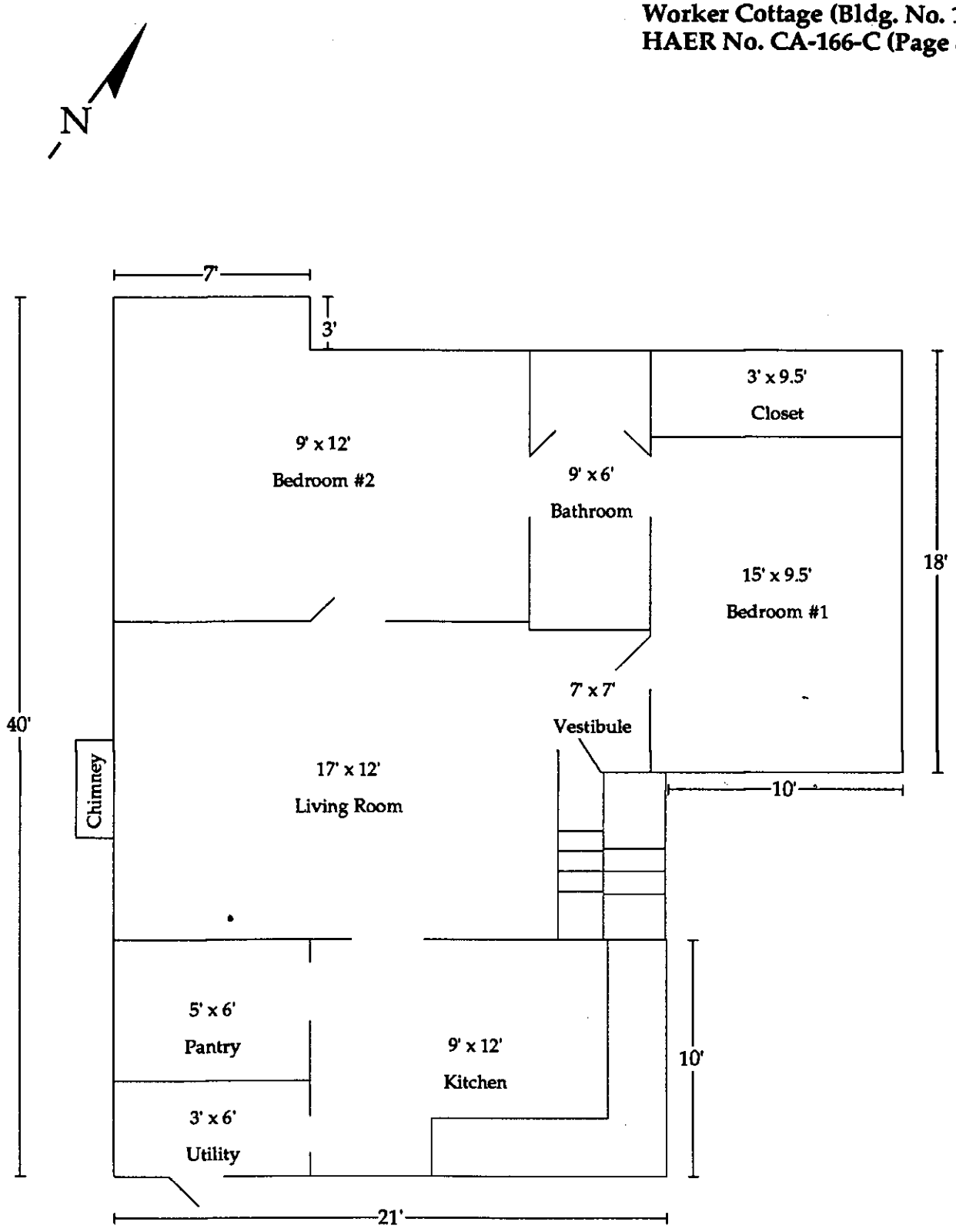
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7'
3'
3' x 9.5'
Closet
9' x 12'
Bedroom #2
9' x 6'
Bathroom
15' x 9.5'
Bedroom #1
18'
40'
7' x 7'
Vestibule
Chimney
17' x 12'
Living Room
10'
5' x 6'
Pantry
9' x 12'
Kitchen
10'
3' x 6'
Utility
21'